

THE BLIND BEFRIENDED

NO. 1310

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 9, 1876,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”
Isaiah 42:16.

This promise is not made to every blind man, or to all sorts of blind people, for there are some blind people whom God does not lead. There is only a peculiar sort of blind people to whom this promise is given; that He will guide them and not forsake them. If you go outside the Tabernacle, take the first turn on the left and walk down what is called the St. George's Road till you come to the end, you may see asylums built for three sorts of blind people. On your right hand you will have the Blind School. That is for the physically blind—those who have lost the sight of these outward eyes. On the left hand you will see the Bethlehem Hospital. That is for the mentally blind, who have lost the inner sight, and are in the more unhappy state of lunacy. Then straight before you, you will see the St. George's Roman Catholic Cathedral. That is for the *spiritually* blind, whose case is all the more pitiable, because these blind people have blind *leaders*, and their deluded souls are prescribed for by physicians who foster their delusions. Now, the promise of divine guidance is not addressed to any of these. It is not necessarily given to the physically blind, for, alas, some of them, in addition to their loss of natural sight, are without a sight of Christ. Nor is it given to the mentally blind, for some of them, before they lost their reason, had made ill use of it, and had despised the Savior; neither is it made to the spiritually blind, for strong delusion is upon them that they should believe a lie, and alas, they wander in the light as in the darkness, and grope like the blind at noonday. There is, however, a fourth kind of blindness which you, who are genuine Christians, will attribute to yourselves. A painful experience has made it clear to you. The promise is made to the confessedly, the *consciously* blind—and I shall try to show that this fitly describes every Christian! Every believer in Christ is a witness of that “judgement for which Christ came into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind” (John 9:39). It is to him and to such as him, that the Lord has said, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known.”

I. Our first inquiry shall be, WHO ARE THEY? Who are these blind people?

We have already said they are *consciously blind people* and they confess that they were once totally blind. Years gone by, before they knew the Savior, they knew nothing aright. Before the light from heaven shone upon them they were in the gross darkness of their natural state. Now, it is not every man that *knows* that he is, by nature, in the dark—and when he *does* know it, he becomes one of the blind to whom the Lord makes this promise! The Pharisees in Christ's day were as blind as bats, but they said, “We see.” “Therefore,” said Christ, “your sin remains.” They were the very people whom it was hard to save because they were a seeing people in their own estimation. But the man who has been converted knows, now, that there was no light in him by nature, that he did not understand anything aright, that he put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light, and light for darkness. He knows that in him—that is in his flesh—there was no good thing, but all manner of corruptions, tendencies towards evil, envy of mankind and hatred of God. Soul, have you ever seen your own darkness? Have you ever seen that nature's light is nothing better than midnight? Have you ever been made to see that, as it were, through Adam's fall, you were plunged into the state of the blind and could not possibly find your way? Well, if you are of that sort, the promise is made to you!

These blind people, knowing their infirmity and feeling their privation, recognize that *what they thought was sight, before, was all delusion*. Ah, there was a time with me when I thought I was righteous. And as I looked upon myself I saw fair white linen upon my loins, but now I know that it was my blindness that made me think I was fully dressed when I was naked. I thought I had many goods, and many treasures. I used to go from case to case to inspect my jewels. I would gladly persuade myself that I was rich. But now I see that I was in the delirium of sin, and therefore, flattered myself that I was rich

when I was poor. I thought then, too, that I was happy. There was mirth and a frothy joy which I thought well worth the having. But now I call that joy, misery, which is sinful, and that mirth to be wretchedness, which is apart from God.

Now our eyes are open to see that we did not see and to discover that it was all dark, and yet we thought it light! Phantoms passed before us—mere shapes of things that were not—but we counted these to be substantial realities. Dear hearer, have you discovered that those bright eyes of yours which you used to possess, which made you see such righteousness in yourself and such pleasure in sin, were, after all, blind eyes and that you did not see at all, but were duped and deluded, and under the witchcraft of Satan, fascinated by the world and beguiled by your own corrupt heart? Well, if it is so, you are one of those blind people who confess their blindness, to whom the promise is most graciously made.

But I think I hear you say, “You are telling us rather of blindness that we used to be afflicted with than of one from which we are now suffering.” Well, the figure will not run on all fours; we must use it, however, to set forth *the present truth* and this is as it ought to be used. Surely, the description, “blind,” may well be applied to the Christian for this reason—that now he does not expect to see that upon which he builds his hope. All that he sees is nothing to him! That which is to him substantial and real is that which he believes. If you ask any believer what he rests his hope upon, he will tell you that it is upon an *unseen* Christ, “whom having not seen we love.” He will tell you that there is a promise, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” And he has realized the sweetness of that word. He does not rest his confidence on a crucifix which he can see with his eyes, but on the Savior who is not here—for He is risen, and ascended into heaven! He does not rest upon a *priest* whose voice he can hear—a man like himself—his confidence is in another priest who has gone within the veil and entered into glory! He depends no longer upon his own doings. These he can see, but what he sees of them makes him despondent. He dares not rest in his own works—he rests in the works of another who has gone up to the throne of God, and carried a matchless righteousness into Jehovah’s presence. He will tell you that he does not even depend upon his own *feelings*—he is very conscious that they are fickle—they change like the weather. As one day we have a little bright sunshine, and perhaps, in an hour we have a hailstorm, and by-and-by are brought back to the very cold of winter, so is it with our feelings. Our experience is always varying and the man that knows himself aright dares not trust in his feelings, nor rely upon his experiences. No, he rests in the feelings of Him who sweat great drops of blood in the garden! His confidence is in the anguish of one who was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, and not in his own anguish. He rests in the death and resurrection—in the wounds and in the triumphs—not of himself in any respect, but of Christ, whom having not seen, he nevertheless trusts, and relies upon! Oh, it is a blessed thing to be thus blind, so that you cannot see any good in yourself, cannot see any good upon which you could rest—cannot discover, even in God’s work apart from Christ—any foundation on which to build! You cannot find in heaven or earth any prop and pillar for the soul, except Jesus crucified. Ransack the universe and where others can see grounds of confidence these truly blind men are unable to see anything, and only say, “These we count dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Oh, blessed blindness, never more to be able to see a solitary ray of hope except in Christ—never more to be able to find any confidence anywhere but in Him whom God the Father has set forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in His precious blood!

Moreover, besides this, these blind people are *content not to see a great many things*. He that is blind in the blessed sense knows that there are many things which he cannot see and does not want to see. For instance, he cannot see into the future. He leaves others to say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and will buy and sell and get gain.” This man is so wisely blind that he cannot presume to peer into tomorrow. He has been told to leave tomorrow with God, for “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” I know some of the Lord’s people who look so far forward that they see a great deal too much for their own peace of mind. They catch a glimpse of trouble ahead and yet that trouble will never come. Some of them see dreadful disasters which never happen! I have known some good old people who were afraid that they should have to spend their last shilling and yet they left ample stores behind when they went home. I have known some who were afraid that they should live so long that they would be a nuisance to their friends, and yet their friends bewailed them when they, at last, fell asleep. I have known a Christian man dread what would happen if—and that, “if,” was entirely his own conjuring up. Some are afraid to die and they feel a thousand deaths in fearing one! There will be no terrors to them in death! There was one who used to be always in bondage through fear of death—he died in his sleep and it would have been a good thing for him if he had been so blind that he could not see the

thing he dreaded. Oh, it is a happy thing not to be able to see the trouble which, if wisely appointed, is as wisely concealed, but to leave it all with God! You have enough to do to fight the battles of today. Permit me to repeat a figure which I have often used before. When Leonidas and the Spartans went into the narrow pass of Thermopylae, where their enemies could only come up one or two at a time, they kept the whole Persian host at bay. But, when afterwards they gave up in despair and rushed into the plain to fight the Persians, they soon fell. Now, if you will stand in the narrow pass of today and just meet your troubles as they come, single-handed, in the name of God Almighty, who is your defender, you will be sufficient for the evil as the evil will be sufficient for the day. But if you get to meddling with all the troubles that may come to pass between now and the next 12 months—you will soon compass yourselves about with perplexities and plunge yourselves into dismay! You had better let them alone. Be blind to the future. Be happily blind and plead the promise, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not.”

There are some other things, too, that these blind people know they cannot see. They are quite aware that if they open their eyes ever so wide they will never see clearly all the *deep secrets*, the profound mysteries of God’s covenant. I know men who are wise in their own eyes and very well assured of their own intellects, who, while palpably ignorant of everything that is rational, are conscious that they know everything that is *spiritual*. Their acquaintance with theology is thoroughly exhaustive. They have learned, long ago, to count five, to reckon them at their fingers ends—one, two, three, four, five! These mystic fingers comprise all the doctrines of the gospel! They know them and they double up their fists at the mention of any of those five points—and they are ready to fight anybody about them. They are men of a great deal of wisdom—seeing men—but I think a man that gets a little nearer to God discovers that he does not know everything and he is quite clear that he can no more compass the whole of divine truth than he can hold the ocean in the hollow of his hand. I have long felt that I shall never understand where the two great truths of God of free agency and predestination meet. I believe them both—believe them with equal faith—but how to reconcile them, I no longer wish to know, because I do not think that God intends we *should* know! Oh, brothers and sisters, there is such a thing as *prying* when you ought to be *believing*! Such a thing as forever quibbling and needing to see where your faith has to acquiesce in being led blindfolded! And who would not wish to be blind, if the blind man’s privilege is to be led by *God*? Who is not willing not to see, if, instead of seeing, which will always be fallible, there shall come guidance from God which is constantly infallible?

Thus, you see, I have attempted to describe these blind people. I have not given a full description of them but I hope there are some of them here. They are people that feel their own weakness, their own lack of knowledge, their own *nothingness*! They are people that are willing to be led, willing to be guided. They are people that cannot see everything and do not *expect* to see everything, but are willing to walk by faith in the unseen God and to trust Jehovah where they cannot trace His footsteps.

II. Now let us consider THE PROMISE THAT IS MADE TO THEM. What shall be done for them?

Well, they have this pact of heaven for their solace—“I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known.” Do you catch the idea? Do you discern the sense of this gracious undertaking? If so, you must be wonderfully struck with the condescending goodness of the Lord in that *He* offers to lead blind men! Certainly it is not an office generally sought! It is not one supposed to be attended with any great honor, but it is a very kindly office and one which any Christian may be right glad to render to his afflicted friend. But only think of God, Himself, coming and guiding the blind—leading His blind children. “I will bring them,” said He. “I will guide them.” So our first thought is that *God Himself will be the guide of His people when they feel their blindness*. He will not leave you to stumble and to grope your way, nor will He bid you depend upon your fellow Christian, who is as blind as yourself, but *He* will be your guide. Think of it! Omniscience shall bow itself to instruct your ignorance! Infinite power shall stoop that you may lean upon its shoulder! Boundless love shall deign without any degradation to take you by the hand and pick your pathway for you! And infinite patience shall continue to direct every step of your course till you are brought to heaven at last! As I said, just now, who would not be blind if he could have God for his guide? Oh, blessed weakness that links me to the strong! Oh, blessed poverty that gives me a lien upon Jehovah’s wealth! Oh, blessed wretchedness that issues in beatitude and conducts me to the happiness and bliss of God! Beloved, as you think of your own blindness, be comforted because *He* sees. As you think of your own ignorance, be cheered because *He* knows. And as you comprehend your own aptness to stumble, be of good courage because *He* faints not, neither is weary! There is no searching of His understanding. God will be their guide.

And, being their guide, *He will lead them in ways they never went before*. The beauty of the promise appears in its special adaptation to meet *the peculiar need*—"I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not." Of course, when a blind man knows the way, he can almost go without a guide. Many of our friends afflicted with the loss of sight find their way, day by day, along the accustomed road. And there have been some that have been so expert, though blind, that they could go over 50 miles of country, or thread their way up and down the streets of a milkman's walk in town, serving at each customer's house without ever making a mistake. In fact, they have often acted as guides to others, but, then, it has always been along a way that they have known. And oh, brothers and sisters, there are many blind sinners here tonight who, I have no doubt, could guide others in the ways that they know! They could guide others in the way of the drunk, in the way of the licentious, in the way of the swearer! They know that way very well! I dare say they could guide young people into the way of infidelity—put a thousand horrible thoughts into their minds. But when the Lord takes such a man as that in hand, He does not lead him that way—He leads him in a way that he never went before! Oh, I remember being led by the divine hand down the dark lane of *repentance* with many a sigh and many a groan! I remember being led into the more pleasant way of *faith* by the same divine hand and brought to the Savior's feet. And since then I have not known the way, have not expected to know the way—for the way of grace that lies before us may be described as the Lord described the way of Israel in the wilderness—"You have not passed this way before." It is a *new* way—and when God undertakes to be our guide, it is all new! Is it not written, "Behold, I make all things new"? I hope that many of us know what it is to be led in a way we have not known. And I trust that others who do not know that, may breathe the prayer at once, "Lord, lead me in the way I have not known." Somebody said, the other night, that the way to heaven was very easily learned. It is the first turn to the right and keep on. Well, that is very good, but I have heard it described another way—out of self, into Christ—only one step and you are on the road to heaven! Out of self and into Christ. It is a way that you know not, but the Lord will lead you in it.

Yet, although the way by which we go is a way that we know not, *we shall be led safely in it*, for it is not only said, "I will lead them," but, "I will *bring* them," which is more. You may lead a man and still he may be unable to follow you. You may be a good enough guide, but his legs may fail him. Happily the text says, "I will bring them," that is to say, "They will assuredly follow where I effectually lead." O believer, though you cannot see the way to heaven, trust implicitly in the Lord, your God, and you shall surely find your way there, for He that *leads* you will also *bring* you! There has never been a vessel which sailed with Christ as a convoy that was captured by the enemy! There was never a pilgrim who entrusted himself to Christ as a guide that lost his way and stumbled to destruction. Now, as of old, our Lord Jesus Christ can affirm, "Of all that You have given Me, I have lost none." He preserves His sheep. He keeps them, yes; unto eternal life does He preserve them. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Blessed are they, then, who, having no sight of their own and being, themselves, unable to find their way, are trusting in Him who has promised that He will effectually lead and bring them home!

Yes, and He will do this in the very narrowest ways, too, for the text says, "I will bring them by a way: I will lead them in paths." I suppose a way may be descriptive of the high road and the path may be like a track across the fields, over hedge and ditch, over stiles and down lanes, through the mire and through the slough. Be it, however, along a high road or among by-paths, the Lord will lead them. Oh, beloved, there are some very narrow ways in the Christian's pilgrimage! Do you not, sometimes, hear a sermon which makes you question whether you can truly be a child of God? What a narrow way it is! You thought, when the preacher discoursed the other day about free grace and dying love, what a glorious highway it was, and you were running along it! But now that he begins to preach about regeneration, the work of the Spirit, and its inward marks and evidences, you are afraid, you hesitate, you stand still and wonder whether you are traveling in the right direction! The road seems so narrow! Well, then, you must pray to your great guide, and say, "Lord, lead me in the paths that I have not known. If there is any very narrow place; something very stringent and searching, and testing, and trying—if there is some high attainment that I have not yet reached; if there is some sweet enjoyment I have not yet known, Lord, lead me there." You have the promise, the performance rests with Him—"I will lead them in paths which they have not known." So, you see, the blessing of the text is wrapped up in this—*you* are to be blind, and God is to be your guide! You are not to want to see, but you are to let Him see for you! You who feel yourselves incapacitated by infirmity are to be led by His unerring wisdom.

III. And this brings us, thirdly, to note **WHAT SHALL COME OF IT**. What shall come of it? Why, the Lord says, "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." Where are you,

brothers and sisters? Are you in a dilemma where everything is dark around you, where you see not your signs and where you feel no sweet tranquilizing assurance? Presuming that you are one of the blind—truly blind—it will not make much difference to you! Do you not perceive that? Why, should you or I, who have sight of our natural eyes, want to read, it would be of little use when the sun has gone down. “Between the lights,” as we say, there is a little wasted time—we cannot make out the letters. Well, now, a blind man is as well off, then, as he is in the middle of the day! When you happen to be in the dark you begin fretting and need a light. The blind man does not need a light—he is just as well without a light as with one. Thus it is a great mercy when God has so far enabled you to be blind—so little needing to see—that when it is all dark around you, you are just as happy as when it is all bright around you—because when it was bright you did not walk by sight—and now it is dark you do not need to walk by sight, either! Oh, blessed is the secret art of living by faith, for as you turn to God in days of happiness and trust Him, so you likewise turn to Him in days of sorrow and distress. In trial or in triumph you still trust Him! It is a dangerous thing to begin to draw your happiness from your circumstances. Thereby you will weaken yourself, for once having drawn happiness from prosperous circumstances, you will, with equal ease, draw unhappiness from adverse circumstances. But if the Lord has taught you not to live according to the sight of the eyes at all, but to rejoice in the Lord always, then you will be prepared to enjoy the same calm, the same peace and the same happiness whatever the circumstances. It was a glorious speech of Job when he said, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” Was it not as much as to say, “I do not trust in Him because He gave me the camels, gave me the gold, and silver, and the sheep and oxen; I do not trust Him for them, though I am glad and thankful, and I do not trust Him because of the earrings of gold, and because of the respect I had when I sat in the gate among the citizens; but I trust Him, let Him do what He likes. If He shall take all away, till there is nothing left, and afflicts me till I scrape my sores with a potsherd, I will not relax my trust in Him. And since I never did trust in my substance, or my health, though He goes farther, still, and slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” Say, then, dear friends, is it not a sweet contentment that does not need to see? To be delivered from regret and repining, knowing that He makes darkness light before us, and why?—Because it is as light in the dark as at any other time, and as safe to those who cease to walk with the eyes, and only walk by faith!

Nor is this all the meaning we may extract out of this gracious promise. If, my dear brothers and sisters, you are surrounded by the darkness of trouble, trust in God and the trouble will vanish. I do not say that the *cause* of the trouble will vanish. Perhaps you will have to bear with that—but the trouble, itself, will cease to trouble you. It will not touch your heart any longer, and very likely the trouble, itself, may go, and the cause of it may go, too, for when the Lord brings His people to be resigned to what they have to endure, He frequently does not call them to endure it any longer. If you are in trouble, I can recommend to you, by experience, to be resigned. I have not as long an experience as some of the friends with gray hairs and bald heads before me, but I believe that they cannot contradict me when I say that He is a faithful God. At any rate, of this I can speak confidently—

*“When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He, near my soul, has always stood;
His loving-kindness, O how good!”*

Thus the light of His countenance has chased away the darkness of my trouble.

And are you in the dark, child of God, through a sense of sin? Some of our friends, you know, get up so high in the scale of perfection that they never have any folly or negligence to bemoan. Most of us ordinary people are afflicted, every now and then, with such heart-searchings and such inward conflicts that we walk in darkness and see no light. Somehow I think the Bible was written for people like we, rather than for our fine brethren, for it rather abounds in the details of such experiences! Should it ever be my lot to get rid of all conflicts and all darkness, I shall be able to dispense with a great part of the Book of Psalms. In fact, I do not know that I should need anything particular except Solomon’s Song, and I am afraid I could hardly get on with that, for even the spouse had to seek her Lord in the dark and was unable to find Him, sometimes, when she had been unwary or remiss. But, oh, if you are dejected by reason of darkness, dismayed with a sense of sin, or distressed through soul-trouble, trust in your Lord and you shall find ready relief!—

*“When we in darkness walk,
Nor feel the heavenly flame;
Then is the time to trust our God,
And rest upon His name.
And when your eye of faith is dim,*

*Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim;
Still at His footstool bow the knee,
And Israel's God your peace shall be."*

He will make the darkness light before you, whatever other sort of darkness may happen to befall you. Only be as the blind man who does not need to see—just leave it all to Jesus—trust in His dear name and He will make the darkness light before you.

And as we are delivered out of darkness, *so shall we be rescued out of difficulty*. "I will make crooked things straight." And God can make crooked things straight! Who among us has not got some crooked thing or other to deal with? As they say that there is a skeleton, somewhere, in every house, so there is a crook in every lot, and none can make straight what God has made crooked! Awkward embarrassments and anxious perplexities full often drive us to our wit's end until we do not know which way to turn! To the right hand shall I go, or to the left? Both seem equally blocked up! Shall I go forward, or shall I go backward? Both ways seem equally hazardous! The judgment has lost chart and compass. And sometimes a child of God really does not know what he ought to choose. He seems to be in a maze and he has not a clue. The road goes in and out, backwards and forwards like a map of the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness. "There," he asks, "what shall I do?" "Well, dear brothers and sisters, the best thing to do in such a case as that is to do nothing at all, but just to trust in the Lord! There is more wisdom in a quarter of an hour's prayer than there is in a quarter of a year's consultation with friends. Oftentimes when we have sought counsel of the living God, He has befriended us. When we have left things with Him, we have always gone wisely. Oh, how He can make the most crooked thing that ever did happen suddenly turn out to be the very straightest thing that ever occurred for our welfare! I know that sometimes I have puzzled my head about some difficulty in my Master's service—asked opinions of lots of people, like a stupid—and I have gone home with my head aching in deeper uncertainty than ever what to do. And I have never discovered how to unravel a knotty point by my own ingenuity—but I have always found that when I, at last, bend my knees, by His grace, and say, "heavenly Father, it is rather Your business than mine. It is quite beyond me and I now leave it in Your hands to guide me." And when I have just put it up on the shelf and said, "I will never take it down again whatever happens," it has gone all right. If I had maneuvered to manage it for myself it would have gone wrong enough. You are often, dear friends, busy in doing yourself a mischief when eager to do the right thing. You do the wrong thing, after all, as though there were a fatality about it. "Stand still and see the salvation of God"; full often a hard lesson to learn, and especially to impetuous spirits, as some of us are, but when it is learned, if we continue to practice it, we shall find it the way of wisdom. Now, my dear sister, do not fall in too hastily with that proposal which has been made to you. Think it over first. Pray about it. Just stop. You may get yourself into a world of trouble. Young man, it certainly looks as if a very fine opening was presented before you, but mind what you are doing! There is a fine opening for flies into many a spider's web—and they would be glad to find an opening for getting out again! Just stop awhile. Stand still and give reflection time to whisper in your ear. Do not delude yourself with flattering visions. Confess that the eyes of your understanding are dark and blind. Let the Lord guide you! Do not have an eye to your own advantage; do not have an eye to the opinion of this world. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all things will go well with you. Ah, they will call you such a fool not to jump at that chance of commencing trade with a man who you know is no Christian. But you are told not to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. Therefore, do not disobey your Master's command, I pray you! Just back out of it and give yourself up to be led and guided by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and you will go right enough. Here is one of the benefits of being blind in this sense, and this is what shall come of it.

IV. And now, lastly, WHAT WILL BE THE END OF IT? Why the end of it will be, if you can see nothing, if you are blind and yield yourself to the Lord to lead you—leaving all that concerns you to His counsel and His care, your life will be strewn with His mercies—fulfilled promises! "These things will I do unto them." And you shall have a life of everlasting love, for He adds, "And not forsake them." You shall find God present with you as long as you live!

Never does a child of God venture everything by faith but the venture answers! You that speculate—I have no doubt that you find that your speculations are as often bad as good. But if you risk everything apparently in your confidence in God, it is no speculation—it is a certainty! He will not fail you! I was greatly refreshed, yesterday, by what you may think to be a very small thing, but it was not small to God. I was turning over our church books and I came to the year 1861, and somewhere in January there is the record—"This church requires £4,000 in order to pay for the new Tabernacle, and we, the under-

signed, not knowing where it will come from, fully believe in our heavenly Father that He will send it all to us in the proper time, as witness our hands.” And there stands, subscribed, my hand and the hands of my deacons, and the hands of my elders, and the hands of a great many Christian women among us. Well, I was pleased to see that we had thus put our confidence in God. There were one or two names down there of very prudent brothers and sisters, and I remember at the time I saw them sign it, I was rather surprised, because they had been doubting most of the time whether we should ever get the money—but they signed their names! A month or two afterwards—say two months—there is this recorded—“I, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who am less than the least of all saints, set to my seal that God is true, for He has supplied us with all this £4,000.” And then follows a fresh minute like this, “We, the undersigned, hereby declare our confidence in Almighty God who has done to us according to our faith, and sent us, even before the time when we needed it, all that was needed. We are ashamed of ourselves to think that we ever had a doubt, and we pray that we may always confide in Him in all things from now on and forever.” And then there is a long list of signatures. Some of the names down there are those of people whom I can see now. You put your names down there thanking God that faith was honored. Well, brothers and sisters, we have had a good many times to do something like that for large amounts, as a church, but has the Lord ever failed us yet? Never! And He never will! And you may depend upon it that in your business, in your household affairs, in your spiritual struggles, if you will trust God, He will be as good as your trust and better! You will never be able to say, “I rested in Him, and was ashamed; I trusted in Him, and I found His promise fail.” Mind, you must have a promise to rest on. You must not go and ask the Lord for every whim you like to get into your heads. But, if He has promised it to you and you can plead a promise, and it is for His glory and you know it is, then see if ever He will run back! Search this book, given by inspiration, and see whether ever a promise of His did fail. Turn, then, to your own lives, by strange experience led, and answer this question: Has He ever been a wilderness unto you? Has He ever been a dry well, or a cloud that mocked you and yielded you no rain? You have trusted in men and you have met your reward, for, “Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” But when you have trusted in God, have you not met a very different reward? And can you not say, “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is”? There, you see, you have got this—“These things will I do unto you.” If you can just trust, the promise will be fulfilled!

Then the last clause of the text is peculiarly inspiring: “*And not forsake them.*” “And not forsake them.” This is no vain tautology. I think that the Lord’s people are subject, at times, to a sudden fluttering of heart, a nervous depression of spirits and a great trembling just when their faith has been in the fullest exercise and the goodness of God has been most conspicuously displayed to them. And I do believe that this little sentence is intended to be at once a powerful tonic and an efficacious sedative. Why is it used? Did it arise from weariness of the flesh in the case of Elijah? You remember how he showed his zeal for the Lord of hosts on Mount Carmel? You remember how vehemently he contended with the prophets of Baal—how signally his prayer was answered when the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust—and licked up the water that was in the trench? You remember how he brought down the prophets of Baal to the brook Kishon and slew them there? And you remember how soon, afterwards, he went a day’s journey in the wilderness, sat down under a juniper tree, requested that he might die and said, “It is enough. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers”? He had much fear, but there was no danger that the Lord would forsake him. Or it may be that this strange terror is the reaction and result after intense excitement. David had been again and again delivered out of the hands of Saul and had heard his old enemy acknowledge that he had sinned and played the fool and erred exceedingly. Yet he went on his way and said in his heart, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul!” But was he forsaken of God? Had he any real cause to suspect such a climax to the Lord’s dealings with him? Far from it!

I do not know, but I am prone to attribute this fear, sometimes, to the infirmity of age—when decay creeps over the mortal frame and the soul sympathizes with the weakness of the flesh. The Psalmist, as I have already intimated, touches all the keys of human passion and all the moods to which believers are subject. Certainly his faith was in full vigor when he said, “*I will go in the strength of the Lord God. I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours only.*” Nor could his gratitude have been at fault when he reviews his life from childhood to advanced years, saying, “*O God, You have taught me from my youth, and up to now have I declared Your wondrous works!*” But you can never forget the impassioned prayer that followed, “Now, ALSO, WHEN I AM OLD AND GRAY-HEADED, O GOD, FORSAKE ME NOT!” Just ring this bell once or twice, this silver, this delicious silver bell—“These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” They will yet get into trouble. Their friends will desert them

as the leaves are gone from the trees in winter, but, says the Lord, “I will not forsake them.” They will be very sick and they will lie in bed till the bed gets hard beneath them, but, “these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” They will come to die and the devil will tempt them. Flesh will be very weak and their bodily pains distressing, but, “these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” They will pass through the river, and they will stand in Judgment, but still, as it is written so shall it be, “these things will I do unto them and not forsake them.” Go on, beloved! Go on, beloved! Though blind, and you cannot see your way, go on, beloved! In the dark and crooked paths, go on, beloved! For as surely as you trust in God, God will fulfill every promise of His to you—and to the last these shall be His words in your ears, “And not forsake them.” For, “I will not fail them or forsake them.” is His promise to His people. Throwing that grateful reflection into a verse—the verse of a familiar hymn, I will conclude—

*“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
He will not, He will not, desert to his foes.
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
He will never, no never, no never forsake.”*

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 43.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—23, 741.

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